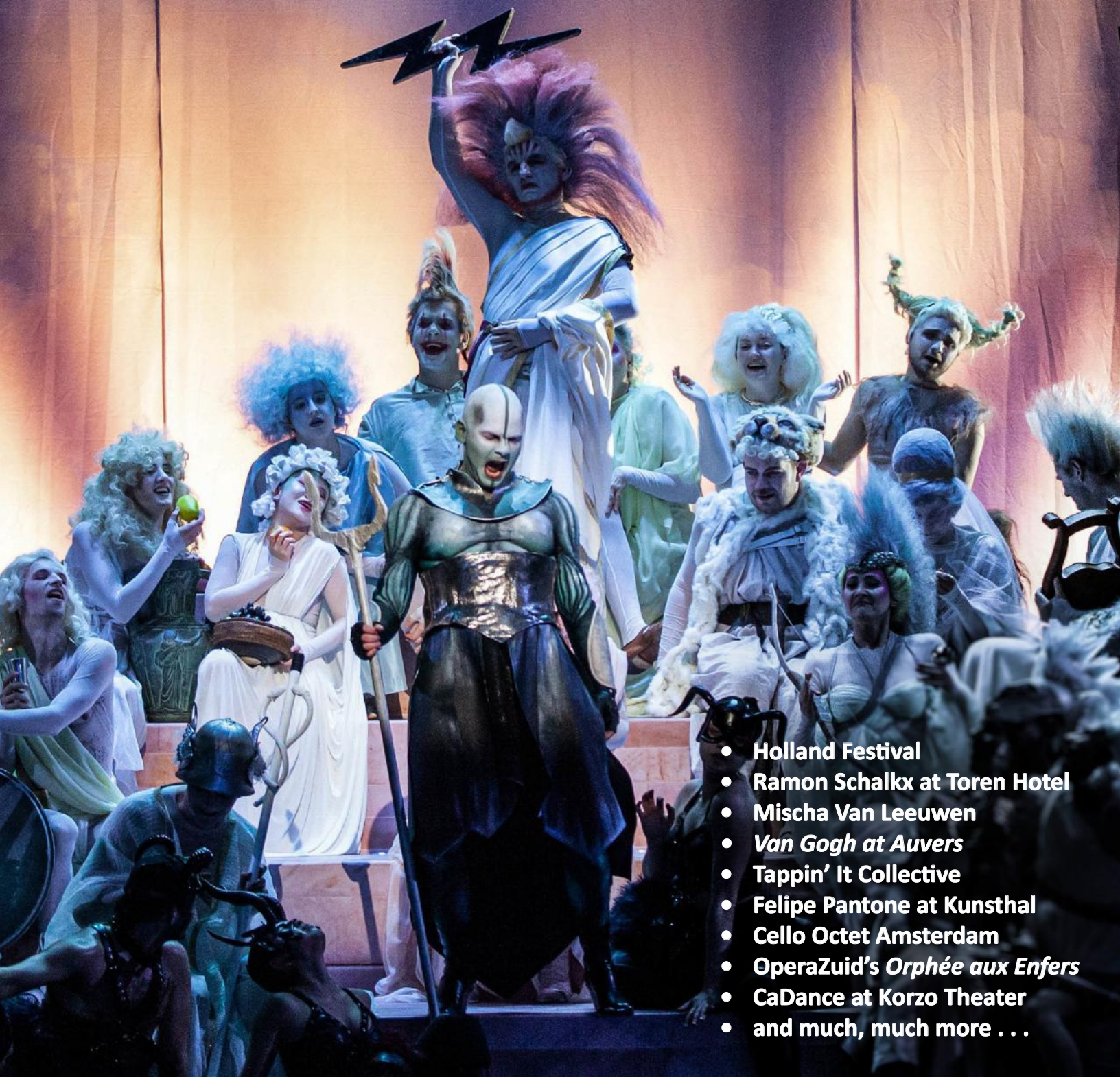


ARTSTALK

Colour Supplement

Number 8

June 2023



- Holland Festival
- Ramon Schalkx at Toren Hotel
- Mischa Van Leeuwen
- *Van Gogh at Auvers*
- Tappin' It Collective
- Felipe Pantone at Kunsthal
- Cello Octet Amsterdam
- OperaZuid's *Orphée aux Enfers*
- CaDance at Korzo Theater
- and much, much more . . .

ARTS TALK

Colour Supplement

Number 8

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ArtsTalk *Colour Supplement* is getting bigger every issue. This month we have forty-two pages covering the visual arts, theatre, dance and opera.

We have in depth, exclusive interviews with Mischa van Leeuwen, principle dancer at Scapino Ballet and with Ramon Schalkx who is exhibiting his sculptures at the Toren Hotel in Amsterdam.

OperaZuid is on tour with *Orphée aux Enfers* as is the Cello Octet Amsterdam with their Beatles' tribute, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Cello Band*.

We cover the Holland Festival in Amsterdam, the CaDance Festival in The Hague and the Delft Fringe Festival. In the museums we saw *Van Gogh in Auvers* at the Van Gogh Museum and Felipe Pantone at Kunsthall in Rotterdam.

Eva Lakeman has a piece about how Dutch paintings have influenced writers and we mark Boom Chicago's 30th anniversary.

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CaDance in The Hague



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Happy 30th Birthday **BOOM CHICAGO**

Celebrating with roasts, famous alum and a big birthday bash during BCCF





Nearly three decades ago on 11th June, Boom Chicago opened its doors in the Iboya on the Korte Leidsedwardsstraat as Amsterdam's first English-speaking sketch comedy and improv theater. What began as an idea sparked by a few puffs of weed has (somehow) turned into the quirky yet influential training ground for some of the most successful and brilliant comedic minds working in Hollywood, including Jordan Peele, Seth Meyers, Jason Sudeikis and Amber Ruffin. To celebrate, Boom Chicago invites you for an exciting and jam-packed program for 2023.

2023 will not be another year in the doldrums – not if Boom Chicago has anything to do about that. The acclaimed comedy theatre is set to provide Amsterdammers, expats and visitors alike with a belly full of laughs. With more shows and shorter runs, the triumphant return of some of their most notable alumni for a not-to-be-missed birthday extravaganza, a bigger Boom Chicago Academy, fresh opportunities to see breakthrough comedic talent, and so much more. All in celebrating their 30th birthday. Boom Chicago is guaranteed to make Amsterdam the place to live, laugh, love in 2023 ☐

RAMON SCHALKX

at Toren by Pavilions Hotel in Amsterdam

Jacob John SHALE

This is the first of what is anticipated to be regular exhibitions held at the elegant Toren by Pavilions Hotel on Keizersgracht in the heart of Amsterdam.

All his life forty-two-year-old Ramon Schalkx has had a passion for creating sculptures, furniture and objects. In 2002, after giving up his job, he started sculpting full time and soon after won the *Zilveren Kei* Audience Award, an art prize for young talent. He currently works in bronze and stone and combinations of these materials. His small sculptures vary from harmonic abstract to layered figurative.

Following on from last month's *Colour Supplement* review of the Toren Hotel, in this exclusive interview ArtsTalk's Jacob John Shale went along to the opening of the exhibition and talked to the artist in the hotel's beautiful courtyard garden . . .







ArtsTalk

The sculpture I was most taken with was the one of the diver. Could you describe the genesis of that?

Ramon Schalkx

That's a beautiful story, which I got from national geographic. The Bajau people are from Indonesia, and they are genetically changed for swimming underwater. And the thing is, I love nature. Nature is the first thing I'm always concerned about, and what some of my work is about, and these people live in harmony with nature. They only take from the ocean what they need. If they use other methods then accidents appear. I love that story. So I made this fisherman who is an eighty year old man, living from the ocean, in the ocean.

ArtsTalk

Have you visited the Bajau people?

Ramon Schalkx

No, unfortunately not. But I would love to.

ArtsTalk

And do you think that this impacts the sculpture in some way, that it's not based on direct experience?

Ramon Schalkx

Well, some of the sculptures are like that. Most of the abstract sculptures I make. For example, the dancers who are in the heart shape – that's a story about experience. I'm always intrigued by dancers.

ArtsTalk

What about them is intriguing to you?

Ramon Schalkx

It's the movement, the elegance, the expression of feelings and joy and sadness that they can manage to send out with their bodies. Besides that, it's the hard work they put into it, the effort they put into it to get to that level. So I got into contact with Peter Leung, who was dancing with the national ballet of the Netherlands,

and I had several conversations with him about dance, about creational dance. And he said to me: well, Ramon, don't try to make the ballet dancer like they all do. You make something that is not possible for the human body. Where my art stops, your art starts.

ArtsTalk

So it's not simply imitation?

Ramon Schalkx

No, not at all. This is pure imagination, for the love of dance. It's a homage. It's the next step after their art.

ArtsTalk

Is there any way in which these sculptures deviate from your previous works, or do you see it as more of a continuation?

Ramon Schalkx

It's more of a continuation. It grows and grows and grows. When I started twenty years ago with sculpting, I started with abstract sculptures. After half a year I won a prize for young talent in our surroundings, a big art collector bought some of my work. Then after a few years making abstracts, I also started making sculptures in wax. So these two separate ways were evolving at the same time, and at one moment I thought: OK, I want to bring these two together. So if you see the woman dancing in the marble blanket – the marble blanket is abstract all the way, it's stone, but then you have the bronze dancer inside that. They are joined together. Those two worlds which were separate are fused in that sculpture for the first time.

ArtsTalk

What do you have planned next?

Ramon Schalkx

I'm working on a new hand, which also involves nature. I want to express that we're intertwined with nature, that we're destroying it but we are completely the same actually. We cannot live without each-other. □

MISCHA VAN LEEUVEN

Principal dancer with Scapino Ballet Rotterdam

Michael HASTED

Mischa van Leeuwen has been a dancer with Scapino Ballet virtually all his working life. He joined soon after the company moved from Amsterdam, where it had been created in 1945, to Rotterdam in 1992 under the artistic directorship of the iconic Ed Wubbe. "I started dancing at a ballet school in Amsterdam when I was six years old, inspired by John Travolta in *Grease* and *Saturday Night Fever*. It was not very common for a boy of my age growing up on the street of Amsterdam to take up ballet. I watched a lot of martial arts movies on the old VHS - Bruce Lee, Chuck Norris, karate and people like that and John Travolta, he was a cool guy. And he was dancing and I thought I want to do that." I suggested that in past times Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly also made dance cool. "Yeh, maybe," he said, "but for me it was John Travolta that did the trick. Even years later when *Pulp Fiction* came out and he had a little dance I thought, yeh, he's my hero."



Photo by Michael Hasted

But there must have been problems, resistance even from friends and family when he said he wanted to go to ballet lessons? "From my friends yes, I had to fight many a time to protect myself. But I was strong and they soon stopped doing that. But for me it was a sort of escape from my situation at home. I didn't have such a great childhood but when I got to ballet school there were all these girls and they treated me like a prince."

I assumed he had seen the film *Billy Elliott* and I asked him if his situation had been like that. "Yes, I guess a little bit but for me it was to escape my daily life. Dancing really formed me, gave me a focus and a career. It saved me. At one point the Academy asked me to go for an audition but I didn't want to do that and then they asked again the following year. So I went and I was let into the school and from then on I went every day to ballet and it became a way of life. I didn't think, Oh, I'm going to be a professional dancer. It's just what I did, and when I got into the higher classes I realized that dance was going to be my life."

Mischa van Leeuwen has been with Scapino Ballet Rotterdam for more than a quarter of a century and for many years as principle dancer with the company. Did he ever work elsewhere or have ambitions to work outside The Netherlands? "When I first came to Scapino in my internship there was no contract available and Ed Wubbe said it might be good if I did some auditions somewhere. So I went to Berlin on a very good contact, lots of Deutsch Marks, but it was no fun. I was the first new dancer in six or seven years. I was very friendly and tried to adjust to the situation but they just didn't let me in there, they didn't make me feel welcome. So after three months I asked to be released and asked Ed Wubbe if I could have my old internship back. Two weeks after I came back my father died so it was as if it was meant to be that I stayed here. Everything happens for a reason in my opinion."

One difference I have noted about Scapino is that it is very much a Dutch company, with mainly Dutch dancers, whereas other larger companies tend to have many more dancers from different countries. "Yes, I think that's right. We are also smaller and we do like to promote Dutch talent and to encourage them to grow and to become good dancers."

Mischa has a very strong physical presence both on and off stage. His shaved head, hoody and street-cred clothes make him look like someone you would not want to tangle with. I wondered if at any point he had thought about doing anything else, apart from dancing. "I did judo, I did football, I did many things. I think that if it had not been for dance I would have become a criminal because I was in this bad environment in Amsterdam. It started when I was about fifteen, hanging around at night, all that crazy stuff. I had a big brother and he was a bad influence on me. But when I was twenty-one I decided to stop all that because I wanted a career and when I came to Rotterdam I left all that behind. Without making that decision to leave Amsterdam I would not have had a twenty-five year career with Scapino doing what I love."

Despite his work with Scapino Ballet, which by normal dance standards is a very long time, Mischa can be seen in most of their productions. "Yes, I still love it and the fire is still burning." And he is spreading his wings a bit. Currently he is on tour with *De Sprong van Nijinsky*, a multi-media piece incorporating live music, dance and text devised and written by Esther Apituley and produced in association with Scapino. In it Mischa plays the Russian ballet star in the latter part of his life, much of which was spent in mental hospitals.

"Of course, a dancer's days are limited and I can't go on dancing for ever," he explained. "But now I have another thing to get excited about, the Rotterdam International Duet Dance Competition."

Mischa created the RIDCC with his partner, on and off stage, Maya Roest five years ago and it has now become the biggest event of its type in the world, taking place each June in Scapino's home theatre in Rotterdam. "Duets or *pas de deux* are fundamental to dance so it was crazy that no one had ever thought of having a competition for it. So we jumped on that," said Mischa.

Maybe Mischa van Leeuwen's dancing days are maybe coming to an end but he will never be far away from Scapino Ballet, and the RIDCC is already a major event on the international contemporary dance calendar. So, he's not going to be hanging up those dancing shoes quite yet □



Esther Apituley's
De Sprong van Nijinsky
Photo by Bart Grietens



Simon McBurney whose company
Complicité will present
Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead
Photo by Jorri Kristjansson

THE HOLLAND FESTIVAL

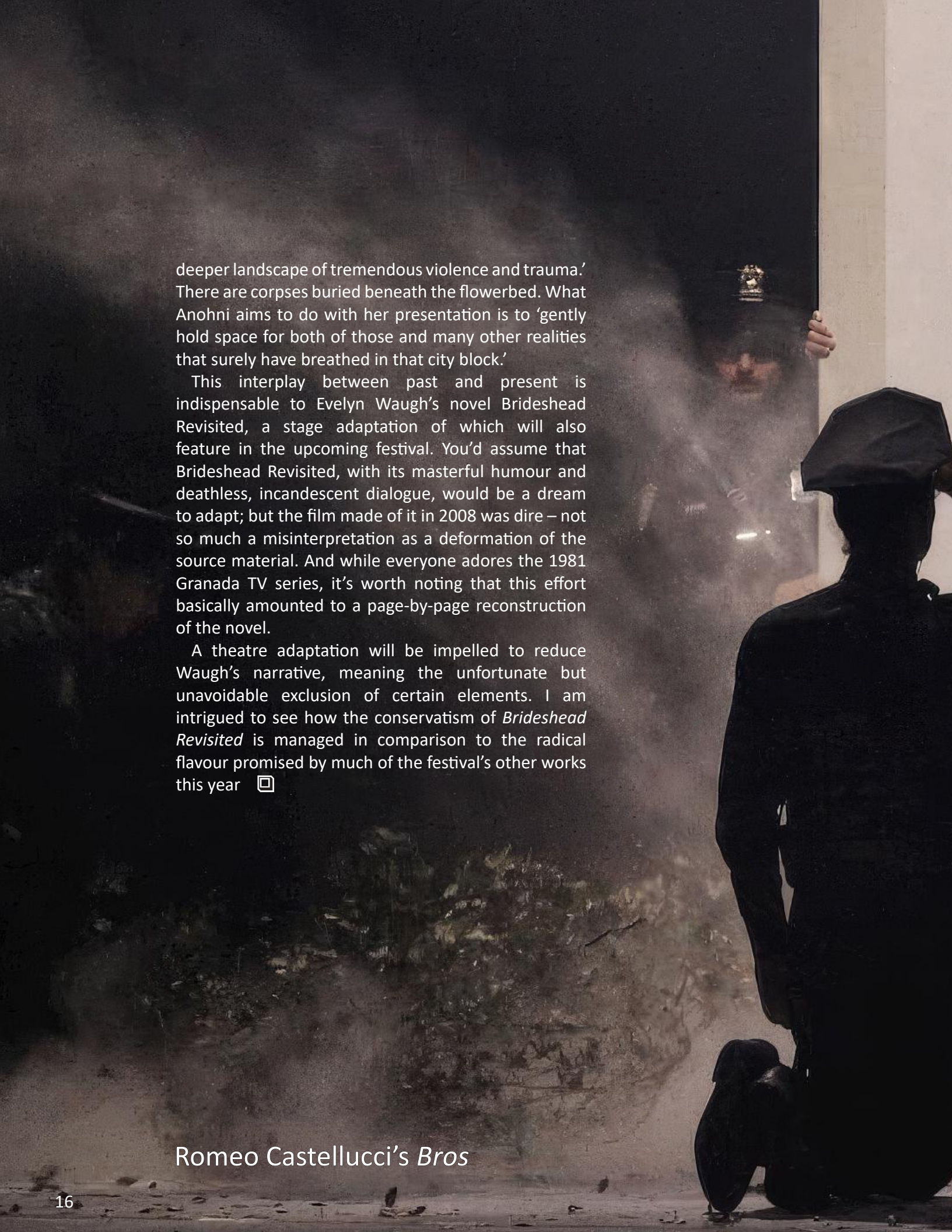
2023

Jacob John SHALE

The artist as social critic: this is the perspective around which the 76th Holland Festival appears to be organised. Audiences are invited to journey into a series of ‘alternative worlds’ which make use of such techniques as poetic-dance (see Lucas Avendaño’s *Leminskata*) and virtual-reality (see Susanne Kennedy’s *Angela*) in order to examine the central crises of contemporary life.

But contemporary life can only be understood in relation to the past. This was illustrated by a fascinating moment in yesterday’s press conference when the British artist Anohni explained, through a pre-recorded

video, how she had been enlisted by the festival to produce a presentation about Gerrit Van der Veenstraat – ‘the road on which I lived in 1978, when I was seven years old. And I often describe that year as the year that my life turned from black and white to colour.’ Yet this street – remembered by Anohni as a place of unimaginable freedom and opportunity – had, several decades earlier, also been the site of the Amsterdam headquarters for the Sicherheitsdienst (the Nazi Secret Police). Upon recently learning the history of Gerrit Van der Veenstraat, Anohni said: ‘this feeling that I had of paradise was shockingly contextualised within a

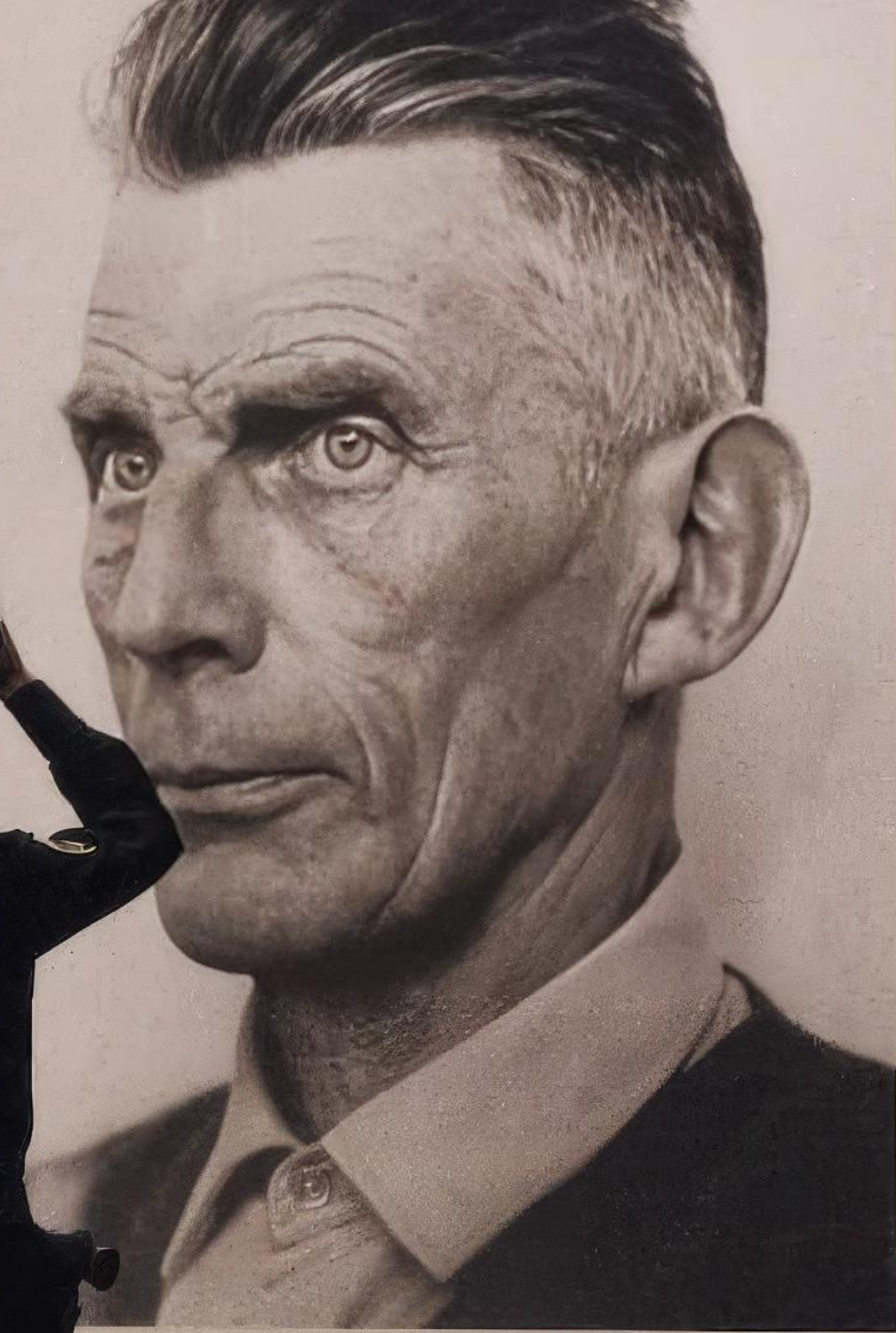


deeper landscape of tremendous violence and trauma.' There are corpses buried beneath the flowerbed. What Anohni aims to do with her presentation is to 'gently hold space for both of those and many other realities that surely have breathed in that city block.'

This interplay between past and present is indispensable to Evelyn Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited*, a stage adaptation of which will also feature in the upcoming festival. You'd assume that *Brideshead Revisited*, with its masterful humour and deathless, incandescent dialogue, would be a dream to adapt; but the film made of it in 2008 was dire – not so much a misinterpretation as a deformation of the source material. And while everyone adores the 1981 Granada TV series, it's worth noting that this effort basically amounted to a page-by-page reconstruction of the novel.

A theatre adaptation will be impelled to reduce Waugh's narrative, meaning the unfortunate but unavoidable exclusion of certain elements. I am intrigued to see how the conservatism of *Brideshead Revisited* is managed in comparison to the radical flavour promised by much of the festival's other works this year □

Romeo Castellucci's *Bros*



HANNAH.

THE HANNAH

Author of AT THE EDGE OF THE ORCHARD

TRACY
CHEVALIER

NEW YORK
TIMES
BESTSELLER



A Novel
GIRL
WITH A
PEARL
EARRING

PAINTINGS THAT INSPIRE

Dutch paintings have been the inspiration for many a writer

Eva LAKEMAN

“The painting, the magic and aliveness of it, was like the odd airy moment of the snow falling, greenish light and flakes whirling in the cameras, where you no longer cared about the game, who won or lost, but just wanted to drink in that speechless windswept moment. When I looked at the painting I felt the same convergence on a single point: a sun struck instant that existed now and forever.” (Donna Tartt, *The Goldfinch*)

As he faces Carel Fabritius’ *The Goldfinch*, Theodore Decker, the protagonist in Donna Tartt’s eponymous novel, enters a time warp in which the past converges with the present and future amidst a bombing at New York’s Met Museum. The magnetic pull of the painting urges Decker to remove it from its place on the museum’s wall, ensnaring him in a crime world he then desperately yearns to escape. Except the priceless painting has such an emotional hold on him he is unable to easily extricate himself.

Dutch artists of bygone eras continue to exert a strong influence on the creative minds of today. Famous Dutch Masters such as Carel Fabritius, Johannes Vermeer and Frans Hals are just a few of an enigmatic group whose paintings have inspired imaginative tales that trickle from their canvases into literature where strokes on sailcloth become words on a page. They are objects of yearning which few can physically have but so many want. Time in a museum with these paintings is often short, fleeting even. Take the Vermeer exhibition, for example, which is on display in Amsterdam’s Rijksmuseum for just five months with limited tickets. A ‘speechless windswept moment,’ until you insert: writers, whose artistry acts as a sort of memorabilia for artwork to flourish across different fields.

Tartt’s novel is a siren call for preserving the age-old artwork. She bridges the gap between artwork and its audience through carefully constructed phrases and she’s not the only one. Marcia Muller’s crime trilogy *The Cavalier in White* follows Joanna Stark, an art security expert, on a cat-and-mouse chase to find who has stolen the Hals painting from a San Francisco gallery. The highly sought-after artwork is central to a story of life and death and a symbol of the preciousness of these artistic creations.

Another work of art you will know is Vermeer’s *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. The girl’s mysterious gaze continues to captivate her beholders who seek to explain what lies behind her mesmerising look. Tracy Chevalier was equally enchanted by the pearl girl’s enigma and composed two hundred and thirty-three beautifully written pages that offer a fictionalised account of Vermeer’s personal life through a glimpse into daily life in 17th century Holland. Mystery solved!

One more noteworthy work of historical fiction is Susan Vreeland’s *Girl in Hyacinth Blue* which addresses the relationship between art and fiction, past and present, by focusing on the ‘lost’ Vermeer of the same name. Through eight interconnected stories, the novel brings to life distinct Dutch eras, like a sort of literary Beltracchi.

While the *Girl in Hyacinth Blue* is not a copy of a famous Vermeer, the novel is a work of art in its own right. After analysing each stroke of Vermeer’s painting, somewhat obsessively, Vreeland was able to create an original in her own mind.

The magnetism of each of these paintings has created narratives beyond their own boundaries and will continue to inspire generations to come □

VAN GOGH AUVERS

His Final Months



Wheatfield under Thunderclouds Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890), Auvers-sur-Oise, July 1890. Oil on canvas

The Van Gogh Museum, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, presents a major retrospective focusing on the final months of Vincent's life.

V*an Gogh in Auvers. His Final Months* unites loans from museums and private collections all around the world, including highlights such as *The Church at Auvers-sur-Oise* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris) and *Adeline Ravoux* (private collection). This is a remarkable opportunity for visitors to see a large number of works by Vincent van Gogh that have never before been shown together.



canvas, 50.4 x 101.3 cms. Courtesy of Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



The exhibition is a collaboration with Musée d'Orsay: eight paintings from the museum's collection are on loan exclusively for this extraordinary project.

Van Gogh in Auvers. His Final Months follows Van Gogh from his arrival in Auvers-sur-Oise on 20th May 1890, where he set to work full of hope and fresh ambition, through to his final weeks in July of the same year, when he increasingly struggled with his feelings of failure, loneliness and melancholy. Despite the inspiration that his new surroundings offered him, he

decided to end his life just two months after arriving in Auvers. Van Gogh died on 29th July 1890 at the age of 37, and was buried in the village's cemetery.

This is the first major retrospective to focus on the Auvers period, a short but crucial phase in Van Gogh's career as an artist. A number of Van Gogh's most renowned masterpieces date from this time, including *Wheatfield with Crows* and *Doctor Paul Gachet* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris), but the work he produced in Auvers is less well known to the broad public than the sun-



Picture courtesy of the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

drenched landscapes that he painted in the South of France.

The exhibition features fifty paintings and more than twenty drawings made in Auvers. Eight paintings from the Musée d'Orsay, once in the collection of Doctor Gachet, Van Gogh's physician in Auvers, will come to Amsterdam on loan exclusively for this extraordinary collaborative project, including highlights such as *The Church at Auvers-sur-Oise* and *Self-Portrait*. Another significant loan is Adeline Ravoux, from a private

collection. This striking portrait, which Van Gogh painted of the innkeeper's daughter, has not been on public display since 1955, and is travelling to the Netherlands for the first time.

Van Gogh in Auvers. His Final Months also features a spectacular series of ten panoramic landscapes from Van Gogh's final weeks. These works, including *Fields near Auvers-sur-Oise* (Belvedere Museum, Vienna) and *Undergrowth with Two Figures* (Cincinnati Art Museum) are being united especially for this exhibition □



Photo by Sjoerd Derine



Tappin-It Collective's **JAZZCAFÉ** goes back to the roots of tap dance

Since the beginning of 2022, dance theater company Tappin-It Collective has been taking major steps within the New Makers scheme of the Performing Arts Fund NL and is introducing more and more audiences to their rhythmic and absurdist performances imbued with contemporary tap and mime. After making their first full-length performance last year with *Doemsdee*, with which they toured the country last autumn, they will return this spring with *Jazzcafé*.

As the only tap theater makers in the Netherlands, Doortje Peters and Robin Lie, founders of Tappin-It Collective, feel the urge and responsibility to investigate the musical roots of tap and bring it to the theater audience. The history of tap and jazz are intertwined and are inextricably linked to America's slavery past. Last February, Doortje and Robin went on a research trip to New Orleans - the birthplace of jazz - where music can be found on every corner of the street.

Jazz is a dream about personal freedom and expression and at the same time the magic of being 'in the moment' together. As a human being you improvise all day long. Because: if you can't improvise, you won't survive. Never. In *Jazzcafé*, the performers challenge each other to do things differently than they normally do, exploring the boundaries of improvisation and experimentation. They tap dance on the ceiling, sing songs backwards, drink wine from a saxophone and play the piano with their feet. Doortje: 'Robin and I are

inspired by the communicative and improvisational aspects of jazz. With an absurdist twist on the jazz theme, we want to shake the heads of our audience and get them to look at forms of freedom they take for granted in a different way." Robin: "Jazz is seen by many people as old-fashioned or inaccessible. These associations are one-sided and do injustice to the rich history and beauty of jazz. We want to make the music understandable and attractive to everyone by visualizing it.

In *Jazzcafé*, Tappin-It Collective collaborates with final director Michael Helmerhorst, scenographer Mattia Papp, composer Guy Salamon and no fewer than four jazz musicians: Collin van den Broek (drums), Lorenzo Buffa (double bass), Abriël Ferreira (trumpet) and Sydney Plummer (vocals). Tappin-It Collective won't let the musicians sit obediently in the orchestra pit: everyone will dance. Doortje and Robin also play instruments and all disciplines overlap. Doortje and Robin created the music together with composer Guy Salamon. In a combination of tap, mime, live music, body percussion, pole dance and roller skating, Tappin-It Collective takes you into a whirlwind of physical musicality in a performance about freedom, about rules and how to break them.

Jazzcafé will be premiering in a short version at the Delft Fringe Festival and, on 17th June, the full version will be performed at the CC Amstel Theater in Amsterdam ■

Cello Octet Amsterdam

SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY CELLO BAND

Michael HASTED



One day in the early 1970s the doorbell of my Islington flat in London rang. It was my friend, musician Mike Batt, popping in to say hello. His Rolls-Royce, parked outside my door, attracting attention from the locals. Mike had come to look at the house next door which was for sale - bear with me please. He could afford it having, that morning, made a cool £20,000 (worth maybe 10 times more now). He had a contract to make cheap, popular LPs for supermarkets and that morning he had recorded an entire album – *The Mike Batt Orchestra Plays The Beatles*. Not entirely original as Beatles’ producer George Martin had released a similar orchestral album years before. The point being that there was an insatiable appetite for cover versions of Beatles songs. And now, more than fifty years later, there is another.

The brilliant and original Cello Octet Amsterdam has re-created the entire *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* arranged for and played by . . . err . . . eight cellos.

Re-named *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Cello Band* and released as CD or album in a facsimile of the original fold-out sleeve, this is a tribute to Beatles’ seminal masterpiece. Often considered the best pop/rock album ever made, it has been lovingly resuscitated for the 2020s, exactly fifty-six years after its first release in May 1967.

Cello Octet Amsterdam is a unique and versatile ensemble that has become a household name, both nationally and internationally. It consists of Alistair Sung, Claire Bleumer, Esther Torrensa, Genevieve Verhage, Rares Mihailescu, René van Munster, Sanne Bijker and Sanne van der Horst. The cello is an adaptable instrument and between the legs of the Octet players this is demonstrated par excellence. The last time I saw them they appeared with dancer Samir Calixto in his brilliant *Summa* at the Korzo Theatre in The Hague. There is something very satisfying about seeing a row of identical instruments being able to produce such a rich and varied sound. But what of *Sgt. Pepper*?



© bordon Photography



As I said, the album is almost a replica of the original, featuring an updated, Dutch-biased version of British pop artist Peter Blake's iconic cover design. Arranged for the Octet by David Dramm, each of the Fab Four's tracks is there – *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*, *She's Leaving Home*, *Lovely Rita* and all the rest, including the best song on the album *A Day in the Life*.

So how does it compare? Or is it wise to compare? Well, without the lyrics we are only left with the tunes so those are what this album stands or falls by. There are, on the original *Sgt Pepper*, some songs that really are best described as jaunty – *With a Little Help From My Friends*, *When I'm Sixty-Four* and *Lovely Rita* and these work particularly well on *Cello Band*.

Does *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Cello Band* stand up in its own right or do you need to be a Beatles fan and know the originals? There are some great tunes but without the lyrics they are, of course, incomplete.

Do the clever arrangements for a cello band make up for that? I think this album will possibly work best for you if you are not so familiar with the original and can listen to without too many preconceptions. As a suite it holds together well and of course the virtuoso playing by the eight cellists is certainly beyond compare.

The lavishly spectacular concert performance will certainly be worth seeing and is currently on tour throughout The Netherlands □



Photos by Foppe SCHUT/
Bordon Photography



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FELIPE PANTONE

Kunsthall, Rotterdam

Michael HASTED

There was a time when OpArt was all the rage, there was a time when Kinetic art was all the rage. Graffiti/Street Art is currently all the rage. The work of Italian Felipe Pantone, born in 1986 in Buenos Aires, Argentina and raised in Madrid, Spain, manages to combine all three and bring a lot more to the party.

A relatively small exhibition in the Kunsthall's top gallery demonstrates the full range of Mr Pantone's talents. There are flat wall paintings, walk through mobile sculptures and, perhaps most interestingly, a large sculpture that was created by the artist in an empty room wearing virtual reality goggles whilst waving a magic wand around. The image only existed in his goggles and was then translated by computer into a sculpture using 3D printing. There is a fascinating insight into the artist at work next to the pieces.

As most of you will know, the standard range of inks used for commercial printing is Pantone's. Now, I don't know if Pantone is Felipe's real name and that it is a coincidence that some of his works resemble Pantone colour swatches or whether he chose his name because they did.

There is a lot of Perspex (or Plexiglas if you are American), both in the flat wall paintings and the installations. It gives much of the work an ethereal quality that draws you in and stimulates the imagination.

Keep your art clean and clinical with little evidence of the human hand at work. This is the show for you. If you like OpArt, Kinetic art and graffiti style work, go and see Felipe Pantone. Even if you prefer your art more painterly, more raw, this exhibition is fascinating on a technical level and certainly has a lot to like. □





OperaZuid's ORPHÉE AUX ENFERS

Michael HASTED

Photos by Joost MILDE

Comic opera – or *opéra bouffe*, if you prefer – is not everyone's cup of tea. It is seen by some opera buffs as flippant, lacking the drama and weight of grand opera, forfeiting the opportunity for majestic arias and a dying heroine. Comparing Offenbach to Wagner, or even Puccini, is like comparing Alan Ayckbourn to Chekhov. No prizes for guessing on which side the scales come down.

But what *opéra bouffe* does offer a company with an adventurous director is the chance to let their hair down, to have some fun. And fun is the word that would describe OperaZuid's splendid *Orphée aux Enfers* (*Orpheus in the Underworld*) which is currently on tour.

Jacques Offenbach's satirical masterpiece first saw the light of day on 21st October, 1858 at the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens in Paris. Described by some critics at the time as "sacrilege" and as



“a disgrace” because the play, set on Mount Olympus, mocks classical Greek heroes. By extension it was seen as ridiculing the grandiose French establishment and even Napoleon III himself. The composer, not one to miss a populist trick, exploited the controversy and his *Orphée* became a huge hit, not least because it was the show that launched a famous dance.

With their production, OperaZuid with director Benjamin Prins, has created a production that would grace any of the world’s great opera houses. They pulled out all the stops and then some more, telling a story that provides myriad opportunities – all of which are gleefully taken.

The marriage of Orpheus and Eurydice is on the rocks, each of them seeking retribution on the other. The rock on which the relationship, and they, finds itself is the aforementioned Mount Olympus, home, as we all know, to the gods. It is from the ranks of these almighty beings that the pair enlist help in order to bring down their erstwhile partner. And there are lots to choose from. They are all there – Jupiter, Juno, Mercury, Diane, Venus, Apollo *et al.* If you threw a stone on Mount Olympus in those days you’d be pretty sure to hit a god.

The piece opens in pastoral bliss with Euridice, surrounded by a small flock of sheep – not real sheep as we have seen in a recent production, nor very realistic ones like we saw in another. No, these were fairly basic sheep but not ashamed of it as they frolicked unaware of what was to unfold. It all kicked off when boring old Orpheus arrived on stage, insisting his wife should listen to his latest violin composition.


The decor, and I think this is what dominated the evening, was outstanding, lavish by any standards. The show would almost have been worth seeing just for the visuals. The pantomime/commedia dell’arte inspired sets by Marloes and Wikke were outstanding with

bright colours and cut out trees and clouds and the transformations were brilliantly done. The costumes by Marrit van der Burgt and brilliant lighting by Julian Malwald completed what was a series of very beautiful tableaux.

The large cast was evidently having a good time and all sang and acted well, led by Amel Brahim-Djelloul as the heroine and Mathys Lagier as her feckless other half. The ensemble work was particularly strong and the dancers, once they had shed their woolly fleeces of the opening scene, were excellent.

I really liked Thomas Morris as Public Opinion, there in a chorus capacity and doubling as a nappy-clad (diaper, if you are American) Bacchus. As Public Opinion he/she really enforced the pantomime analogy bejewelled in a sequined blue frock and fancy hair do – a cross between a pantomime dame and another dame, Edna Everage [Google her]. If you keep your eyes open you may well encounter her lurking in the foyer before curtain up – either monitoring public opinion or influencing it, not sure which.

Now, as I said, *opéra bouffe* provides no great arias but Offenbach’s *Orphée aux Enfers* does have the distinction that it launched the *Galop infernal*, better known as the Can-Can and, incidentally, providing the ident music for Eurovision which, if you watched the recent Eurovision Song Contest, you would have recognised.

So, all in all, a splendid very enjoyable evening was had by one and all. This is the second consecutive OperaZuid production that I have seen that exceeded my expectations, so I shall eagerly look forward to their next 

OperaZuid’s *Orphée aux Enfers* tour continues until 22nd June.

CaDance

Korzo Theater's International Dance Festival

Eva LAKEMAN

was at three of the events

CaDance was back. From 18th to 29th May at venues across The Hague the Korzo Theater presented their biennale festival consisting of artistic works that transcend boundaries in showcase performances that had us stopping in our tepid tracks. This year's theme was *Where Worlds Collide and Connect* and dance shows were composed explicitly with this message in mind. We saw a couple of them.

The Festival opened with the premier of *Songs and Silences*, a performance originating from the creative genius of the critically acclaimed Israeli choreographer, musician and artistic director Amos Ben-Tal.

The piece is a spellbinding concept by OFFprojects, a collective founded by Amos consisting of former dancers from the NDT and Israel's Batsheva Dance Company who construct interdisciplinary performances with an aim to inspire artistry across the world. The viewer is invited to become absorbed in a human experience, not on their own, but of their own.

To set the scene. In a dimly lit studio, a series of strangers must sit on identical black stools in preparation for a three-hour-long rendezvous through mind and matter, time and space. Every fifteen minutes, the performance halts to allow viewers to either stay, leave or switch

their position to another dreary, dull chair. The simplicity of the scene authorises the viewer to enter an ulterior world outside of themselves with no distractions bar intermittent *Songs and Silences*. However long or short you wish to stay is solely up to you.

Amos combines three primary forms of expression in the piece, namely; dance, music and text. The performance is not the usual evening-long dance show you might expect. Instead, it's a series of short burst intervals executed by eight eloquently refined dancers as well as Amos himself, whose guitar skills perfectly tie together the performance. You will be mesmerised by the rigid movements of each dancer, the passion behind their eyes and Amos' delicate plucking. He tugs on your heartstrings as he invites you to step into another soul's tumultuous world. A selfless act in an attempt to better understand the peculiar 'other.'

Despite the human condition existing as a universal claim, Jacques Derrida's notion of *différance* is exposed in *Songs and Silences* in the way each person resonates with Amos' performance through their own lone life experience, no matter how similar or different it may be. *Songs and Silences* is an immersive experience which induces a fit of inhalation through the Silences and exhalation through the Songs.



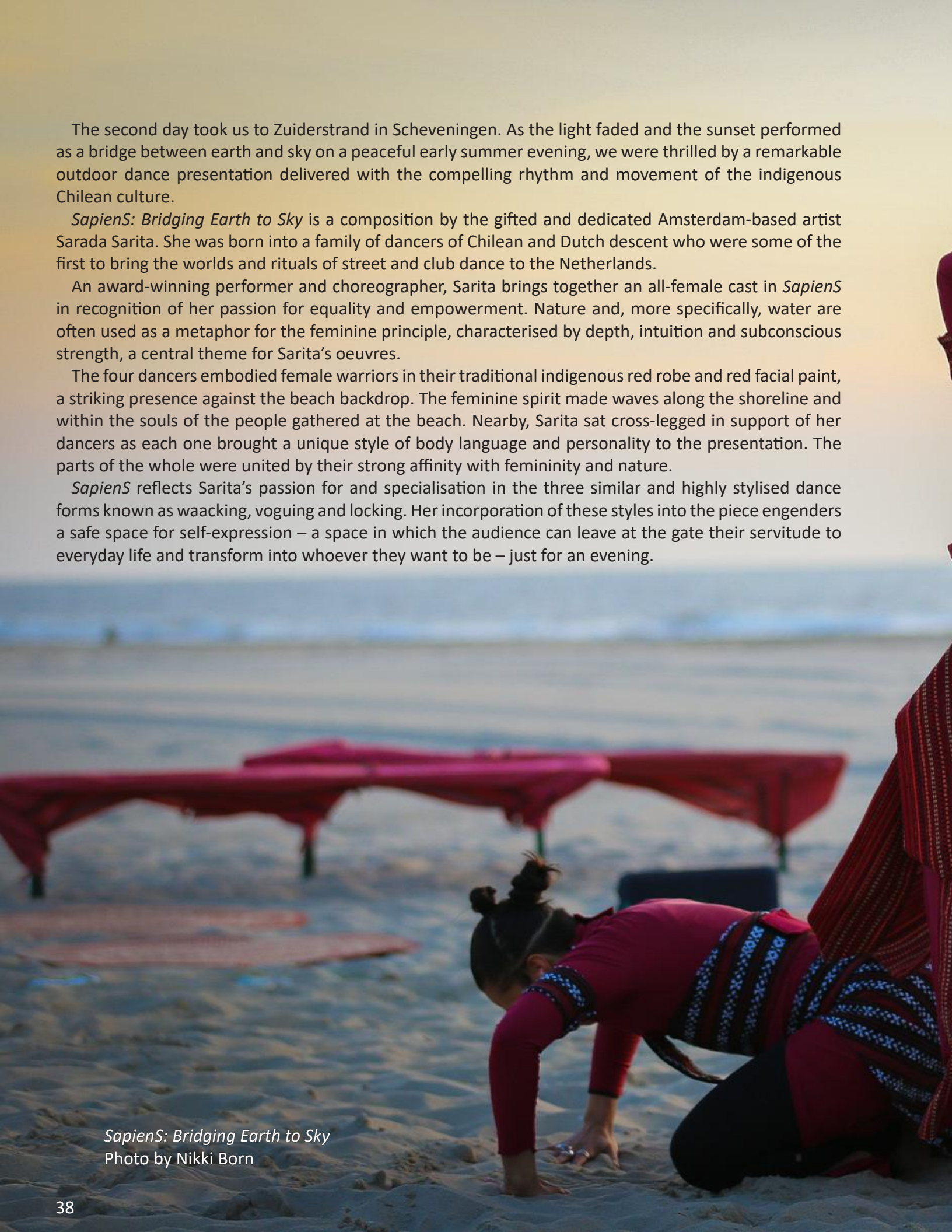
The second day took us to Zuiderstrand in Scheveningen. As the light faded and the sunset performed as a bridge between earth and sky on a peaceful early summer evening, we were thrilled by a remarkable outdoor dance presentation delivered with the compelling rhythm and movement of the indigenous Chilean culture.

SapienS: Bridging Earth to Sky is a composition by the gifted and dedicated Amsterdam-based artist Sarada Sarita. She was born into a family of dancers of Chilean and Dutch descent who were some of the first to bring the worlds and rituals of street and club dance to the Netherlands.

An award-winning performer and choreographer, Sarita brings together an all-female cast in *SapienS* in recognition of her passion for equality and empowerment. Nature and, more specifically, water are often used as a metaphor for the feminine principle, characterised by depth, intuition and subconscious strength, a central theme for Sarita's oeuvres.

The four dancers embodied female warriors in their traditional indigenous red robe and red facial paint, a striking presence against the beach backdrop. The feminine spirit made waves along the shoreline and within the souls of the people gathered at the beach. Nearby, Sarita sat cross-legged in support of her dancers as each one brought a unique style of body language and personality to the presentation. The parts of the whole were united by their strong affinity with femininity and nature.

SapienS reflects Sarita's passion for and specialisation in the three similar and highly stylised dance forms known as waacking, voguing and locking. Her incorporation of these styles into the piece engenders a safe space for self-expression – a space in which the audience can leave at the gate their servitude to everyday life and transform into whoever they want to be – just for an evening.



SapienS: Bridging Earth to Sky
Photo by Nikki Born



SapienS is an overt celebration of femininity and life itself. The indigenous music tugged at the emotions of the audience as we were drawn into a ritualistic world of hypnotic chanting and drumming. With this composition, Sarita reminds us of the fluidity and intersectionality of all living breathing subjects in aspects such as identity, race, gender, sexuality and our inextricable link with Mother Nature. *SapienS* comes at an especially urgent time as the world battles the throes of Climate Change which at its very core level is the result of a human disconnect with nature.



Resident choreographer at the Korzo Theatre, Astrid Boons is highly acclaimed for creations in which she explores the body as a vessel capable of transcending its physical borders to enter new spaces and embrace self-discovery off the beaten track.

Boons creates from a distinctly female angle and last night, the Korzo offered its platform to *Arise*, a production both unsettling and uplifting.

The impact of Boons' short composition is immediate. For thirty minutes the audience is asked to confront the female condition and its attendant challenges. Boons' work is brutal in its honesty and unflinching in its determination. At no point is the audience offered an opportunity to look the other way and at no point were we inclined to avert our attention.

The lead actors are three female dancers clad in tight fitting clothing showcasing the sheer beauty of the female body. But these beautiful women are in distress. Their bodies contort, convulse and misshape

and spasms compromise their delicate physiques. Their facial expressions reveal disquiet and convey pain and unhappiness. But at the same, there is a strong sense of intuition, communication, interdependence and determination born of vulnerability - those female qualities attributed to intangible inner strength,

Boons' skilful choreography is a refreshing reaction to the semblance of normalcy in the contemporary female experience. The dancers in *Arise's* are confined, their fierce and robust movements challenge the social and societal expectations and restrictions placed on women as though they are physically attempting to loosen themselves from their historically embedded shackles. They channel both their physical and emotional strength with urgency to resist and transcend.

Arise is a magnificent, mesmerising experience that keeps you gripping your seat. Boons' collaboration with Chilean Dutch composer and sound designer Miguelángel Clerc Parada introduce an even deeper and eerily familiar element to the stormy setting. Clerc's skills in experimental music composition bring an unconventional range of tortuous thumping throughout *Arise* to reflect the plight of so many women who must engage over and again with the repetitive conventional norms bestowed upon them.

Above the dancers, glaring fluorescent lights dangle from paper-thin wires hanging from the ceiling, a highly-effective production design that brings a stark clinical feel to the production, shines a spotlight on the female condition and conveys the unequivocal nature of Boons' message □



"Boom was where I became my best comedic self: the excitement of Amsterdam, the freedom of that environment, the letting loose—it's magic. There's no better training ground." —Jordan Peele



PRESENTS

THE 30 MOST IMPORTANT YEARS IN DUTCH HISTORY



BY ANDREW MOSKOS AND PEP ROSENFELD
WITH MATT DIEHL AND SASKIA MAAS

FOREWORD BY SETH MEYERS BACKWORD BY JORDAN PEELE